How NIDDK Supports Research

The NIDDK has employed multiple strategies over the years to support biomedical research relevant to its mission, including the following.

Extramural and Intramural Research Funding: The NIDDK directly funds biomedical research through grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts to advance knowledge in order to extend healthy life and reduce the burden of illness and disability. Many of the research studies supported by these funding awards are investigator-initiated, but some result from solicitations by the Institute. Scientists at universities, medical centers, and companies throughout the country receive funding from the NIDDK to conduct a broad spectrum of basic, clinical, and translational research. In addition to this extramural research, the NIDDK also supports scientists in its Intramural Research Program laboratories in Bethesda, MD and Phoenix, AZ. The NIDDK also supports research centers and research training (described below), as well as scientific conferences and shared resources.

Research Training and Mentoring: NIDDK-funded training programs work to maintain a "pipeline" of new investigators at every career stage. These include summer training programs for high school and college students, with special opportunities for underrepresented minorities; fellowships for medical and graduate students; and support for postdoctoral researchers and physician-scientists. Early career awards are available for newly-independent investigators, while established investigators are encouraged to mentor more junior scientists through mid-career awards.

Research Centers: Through its Research Centers program, the NIDDK supports multi-disciplinary projects, shared research resources, training, and research translation; aims to integrate basic and applied research; promotes research in areas of clinical applications; and facilitates exploration of new research directions through flexible pilot funds. The Institute funds Research Centers focused on diabetes, digestive diseases, kidney diseases, urology, and molecular hematology, as well as molecular therapy and cystic fibrosis. Another group of Centers conducts research on nutrition and obesity.

External Input: To help inform current activities and strategic planning for future research efforts, the NIDDK seeks input from investigators, professional organizations, patient advocates, and the public. The Institute's National Advisory Council provides advice to the Institute from the scientific and lay communities. The NIDDK convenes scientific workshops and *ad hoc* planning groups to help assess the state of the science and to solicit input on research challenges and opportunities. Through Consensus Development Conferences, panels of external experts develop guidelines for the definition and treatment of diseases and identify gaps in knowledge.

Collaboration and Trans-NIH Research Efforts: The NIDDK actively collaborates with other Institutes, Centers, and Offices at the NIH, as well as with other agencies and other partners, to leverage expertise and resources and accelerate research progress. For example, within the NIH, the NIDDK has a leadership role in trans-NIH obesity research efforts and leads collaborative research efforts in diabetes, liver diseases, and other areas. The NIH Common Fund supports cross-cutting, trans-NIH programs, including programs of the NIH Roadmap for Medical

Research, and the NIDDK plays a leadership role in ongoing initiatives related to the microbiome and epigenomics. In a new effort, the NIDDK, along with the other components of the NIH, is deploying funds made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to support highly meritorious research projects; supplements to accelerate the pace of ongoing science and provide for research training; and new NIH activities, such as Challenge Grants.

Research Coordination Across Agencies: The NIDDK leads several key trans-agency coordinating committees. The Diabetes Mellitus Interagency Coordinating Committee coordinates the Federal investment in diabetes programs across the NIH and other Federal agencies, and provides for the communication and information exchange necessary for coordination. The Digestive Diseases Interagency Coordinating Committee promotes the coordination of research efforts across the NIH and Federal agencies. The Kidney, Urologic, and Hematologic Diseases Interagency Coordinating Committee facilitates the sharing of information about ongoing and planned activities. The Division of Nutrition Research Coordination addresses research and training activities.

Science-based Health Education: The NIDDK supports a number of programs designed to improve health and reduce the burden of disease for patients by disseminating science-based educational information. They include the National Diabetes Education Program, the National Kidney Disease Education Program, the Weight-control Information Network, Information Clearinghouses, and additional disease awareness campaigns.